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Assembly California Legislature



DAVE COX
ASSEMBLY REPUBLICAN LEADER
FIFTH DISTRICT

July 17, 2001

Assemblyman Dennis Cardoza
Chairman of the Assembly Rules Committee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Cardoza,

I am writing because the recent tactic of escorting special interest groups onto the Assembly floor to engage in what the *Sacramento Bee* called "blatant political bribery" has sullied the integrity of the legislative process.

We understand that lobbying is a part of the political process and under the best circumstances can serve to inform and educate legislators on issues of complexity. When an office escorts advocates and/or professional lobbyists onto the Assembly floor to pressure legislators, that office has violated the sanctity of the house and the trust vested in legislators as guardians of the legislative process.

Allow me to quote from the state's newspapers:

- "Leaders of major agribusiness organizations spent most of the day standing in the back of the Assembly chambers urging lawmakers from farming areas to vote for the budget because it also contains more than \$60 million in tax breaks targeted for agriculture." – *Bakersfield Californian*.
- "County sheriffs and representatives of the Central Valley farming region could be seen Monday working individual Republican lawmakers in the back of the Assembly." – *LA Times*.
- Heads of agriculture organizations...spent the entire day on the Assembly floor as guests of Assembly member Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced, and watched as Briggs voted for the budget. they were not shy about cornering other republicans from farming districts to lobby for their votes. – *Fresno Bee*.

May I remind you that the back of the Assembly floor pass issued by the Speaker's office references Assembly Rule 118 which prohibits anyone but a member of the Legislature from influencing the legislative process. It reads:

"The holder of this guest card agrees not to engage in influencing the passage or defeat of legislation in the Assembly Chamber."

I am sure that you will agree that our state budget should reflect the values of all Californians, whether or not they have lobbyists working for them on the Assembly floor.

Thus it was a sad coincidence that in the 2001-02 budget, powerful farm interests and lobbyists received tractor tax breaks, while average farm workers received a sales tax increase.

A regrettable precedent has been set. Some may have won their budget, but the people of California may have lost their house.

I encourage you to address this issue directly with the full Assembly when we next convene.

Sincerely,

DAVE COX
Assembly Republican Leader

cc: Assembly Speaker Robert M. Hertzberg
Assembly Republican Caucus